



11/17/2006 08:31 PM  
GMT

To: yose\_planning@nps.gov  
CC:  
Subject: El Portal Road construction

RECEIVED

EPR-01-S  
NOV 20 2006

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

We need the road to be safe and adequate. Traffic needs to flow without slowdown, danger or repeated construction.

Because more and more of the campsites are closed, it is imperative that good permanent roads be maintained in order to handle the increased traffic from "daily visitors" who cannot find overnight sites within the park.

Yosemite NP Services have a long record of protecting the environment/river, so I have no concerns there.

Do the road repairs as soon as possible!

Darrell Fevergeon

Bend, OR 97702

dfevergeon@juno.com

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RECEIVED  
EPR-02-S  
NOV 20 2006



"John Schooling"

11/17/2006 09:02 AM  
PST

To: <Yose\_Planning@nps.gov>

cc:

Subject: El Portal Road Reconstruction - Pohono Road and the Big Oak Flat  
Road Intersection

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Gentlepersons:

Your letter states "Important considerations throughout the planning process will be to maintain the road's essential historic character as a winding, narrow mountain road, and to consider the protection and enhancement of the Wild and Scenic River."

This is a nice thought, but it begs the pivotal problem that plagues your valley Too many motor vehicles. Can you imagine what Zermatt would be like if it contained the vehicles which Yosemite permits in its valley? The only feasible long range plan is to have your three western roads lead to a parking lot outside the valley from which people would then travel by bus or train into it, even if at that point the river becomes less than wild and scenic.

I have been visiting the valley regularly since about 1950 and have used tent camping, trailer camping, and all of your three lodges, including the Curry tents and housekeeping Although some of this type of use would be rendered unavailable by the needed elimination of motor vehicles, it is for the good of all visitors. I hope you will appreciate that my use of the valley for over a half a century gives me some perspective about the quality of a visitor's experience that can in the future be restored through the elimination of motor vehicles.

I encourage your consideration of this as you plan your road reconstruction

John Schooling

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RT	#S	LT	DT	UT	IA	IR	OR	TS

11/21/2006 10:47 AM  
PST

To: Yose\_Planning@nps.gov  
cc:

**.Subject: scoping comments on El Portal east segment**

RECEIVED  
EPR-03-S  
NOV 21 2006  
ment  
P. 1072  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center  
P.O. Box 396  
Twain Harte, CA 95383

November 21, 2006

Superintendent and Park planning staff  
Attn: El Portal Road Reconstruction - Pohono Bridge to Big Oak Flat  
Intersection  
P.O. Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 95389

Dear planning staff:

These comments are provided in response to the El Portal Road Reconstruction - Pohono Bridge to Big Oak Flat Road Intersection project.

Just an initial comment on process -- when you entitle a project with such a long name and then direct members of the public to write such a long title as the requested mail address, it almost appears as if the planning staff is intentionally trying to intimidate or make it difficult for the general public to respond. The "Attn" address and project title could easily be something such as: "Segment 4 El Portal Road" or something considerably shorter than the lengthy title given. We understand that the Park needs to clarify that this is not tied to one of three previously treated road segments and that is current project is not the original El Portal Road Reconstruction project. Nevertheless, whenever the Park planning staff can make something simple and easily do-able, the Park is likely to engage that many more members of the public in the process.

Specific Comments:

CSERC recognizes the delicate balancing act that the Park is being required to do with this project. Ideally, any action taken now would be a long-term reconstruction that not only protects existing use, but which also provides for the long-term management goals for the river corridor. The road system should clearly be consistent with those goals.

Given legal constraints and the need for short-term work, CSERC suggests the following:

- 1) In an EA analysis and alternative consideration, spell out very clearly the specific Outstandingly Remarkable Values that were identified as being applicable to that segment of the Merced River. Above and beyond the ORVs that were selected by Park planners and the

P	I	L	E	O	R				
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EPR-03-S  
P. 2 of 2

Superintendent in the previous decisions for the Merced Wild and Scenic River Management Plan(s), if there were any additional "potential" ORVs that could conceivably be identified for this specific river segment, then those potential ORV's should also be spelled out in the EA.

2) Once all potential ORV's are identified, planners should explain how each alternative would ensure that the ORV's will be protected/affected if that alternative approach to the road reconstruction is selected. If one alternative poses greater risk to an OHV than another alternative, that comparison should also be clearly acknowledged, even if Park planners believe that no significant harm will occur to ORV's under any of the alternatives.

3) Each alternative should spell out how it would either be positive or negative for future additional work that may be done for long-term motorist safety and configuration issues in projects that may be done after approval of a revised Merced W & S River plan.

4) The EA should explain or describe all past credible concerns raised by critics of the Park or concerned members of the public during past scoping/comment periods if those past concerns, comments, or criticisms clearly also apply to the current limited reconstruction project of this single mile of roadway.

5) Finally, CSERC urges that no action be approved that will somehow interfere with future management options. For example, if in this short-term reconstruction project one alternative would be to double the width of the roadway by bulldozing, clearing 20 feet on the north side of the roadway and shoring up the cut-bank, then that alternative might eliminate a future option that would basically keep the one-mile segment as a one lane each direction roadway without substantial alternation of existing trees, bushes, riverbank, etc.

The bottom line for CSERC in this particular instance is to get speedy approval of whatever essential work is needed to keep the roadway functioning, safe, and structurally sound enough to be the base for any future widening, strengthening, re-design. At the same time, CSERC believes that work should not be approved in this specific project if that work is not directly intended to address the immediate risk to health and safety and to provide a long-term solution for the portions of the road at risk of being undercut by the river.

Since the open house opportunities and show-me field session come during a week that is already heavily booked and is also a holiday week, CSERC staff will not be attending those sessions. We do ask to be kept informed of all future opportunities to be engaged on this and other planning projects in the Park.

Respectfully,

John Buckley, executive director

Los Angeles, CA  
90068

November 18, 2006

RECEIVED

EPR-04-5

NOV 21 2006

D. 1081

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Superintendent  
Yosemite, CA 95389

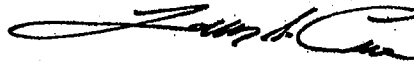
Dear Sir:

This letter is in response to the road reconstruction proposal from Pohono Bridge to the Big Oak Flat Road intersection.

This project should not take place. The reason for it is not to prevent the catastrophic collapse of the roadbed, but to bring this section of the road into conformity with sections further west in the Merced Canyon that provide for the safe passage of larger and wider tourist transport vehicles.

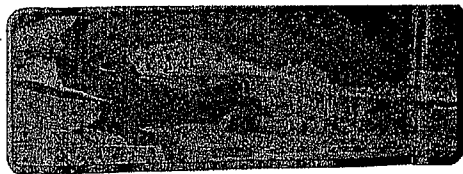
In the interests of environmental and historic preservation, I suggest the following action is necessary: All areas in Yosemite Valley east of the Big Oak Flat Road intersection and the Wawona Tunnel be declared the Yosemite Valley Historic District, in which any new development is henceforth prohibited. This is the only means by which the historic character of this area is going to be preserved in future years.

Sincerely yours,



Lawrence S. Crane

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RECEIVED

EPR-05-3

21 2006

P. 10/1

Yosemite National Park



Mrs. Mary Clark

Culver City, CA 90230

Nov. 17 06

Dear Sirs,

I have only taken the El Portal Road a few times so I am unable to comment on it but I think the area could be developed to, not only provide housing for employees who work in the Yosemite Valley, but <sup>provide</sup> housing, camp sites and parking for visitors with public transportation daily into and out of the valley.

Would this area be feasible as a place for visitors to stay and visit Hetch Hetchy, especially after the valley is drained, and avoid any building there of permanent structures?

If there are such uses of the land, what are the drawbacks? People who live there now would have more traffic and air pollution and roads would have to be widened.

But there might be better stocked grocery stores, restaurants and hardware stores.

Some of my happiest moments were spent in Yosemite Valley. I used to come before and after we had children. It is so hard to get a camping reservation for a week that I have pretty much given up on that.

I try in January February and March for a summer week and once I got it.

My grown daughter joined me from her home in Oakland for a weekend. My Nephew came with his wife and 11th grad for the same weekend but my sons and other friends were not able to leave jobs to join me. I love being there and joined the and visitors and married several groups but it felt guilty to spend a summer.

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IR	
OR	
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I share your love for Yosemite. I share your love for reading this. I share your love for Thank you for Mary Ellen Clark



Daniel Styer

11/22/2006 08:10 AM  
EST

To: Yose\_Planning@nps.gov  
cc:  
Subject: Scoping comment; El Portal Road Reconstruction

06  
RECEIVED

EPR - 08 - S

NOV 22 2006

P. 1071

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

The National Park Service should consider reconstructing the entire road, or one lane of it, as an elevated road like the Blue Ridge Parkway on Grandfather Mountain.

Daniel F. Styer

Oberlin, Ohio 44074

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Berkeley, CA 94704-1622  
November 20, 2006

RECEIVED  
EPR-07-3  
NOV 22 2006  
P. 1031  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Michael J. Tollefson, Superintendent  
Attn: El Portal Road Reconstruction--  
Pohono Bridge to Big Oak Flat Road Intersection  
P.O. Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 95389

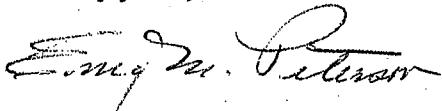
Dear Superintendent:

Thank you for sending me the *El Portal Road Reconstruction--Pohono Bridge to the Big Oak Flat Road Intersection* announcement.

In my view, it would be best to rebuild the section of this heavily travelled road into Yosemite National Park, not just do emergency repairs. Do not wait. Heavy buses use this route. Undercut roadway banks can fail at any time.

Please add my name to the park's planning list to receive the *Planning Update* newsletter as well as other planning-related notices, if my name is not on the list. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



(Mrs.) Emily M. Peterson

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11/22/2006 09:43 AM  
PST

To: <yose\_planning@nps.gov>  
cc:  
Subject: El Portal Road Construction

RECEIVED  
EPR-08-3  
NOV 28 2006  
p. 1 of 1  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

I agree that the reconstruction of this road be done to safeguard the wild aspects of the surrounding sections of the Park especially the wild river that travels adjacent to the road . I also agree with the idea to maintain the road as a small mountain road as much as possible . Negative impact on wildlife should be incorporated in the project as much as possible .

Gerald Orcholski

Pasadena, Ca 91104  
626-797-3531

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RT	#S	LT	DT	UT	IA	IR	OR	TS



11/22/2006 10:45 PM  
EST

To: yose\_planning@nps.gov  
cc:  
Subject: El Portal Road Reconstruction

RECEIVED  
EPR-09-S  
NOV 28 2006  
P. 1081  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Thank you for letting me know about the planning for the El Portal Road Reconstruction. I agree with maximizing the protection of the Merced River as a wild and scenic river, and I also agree with repairing the bridge to make it safe before it falls apart. I also suggest encouraging visitors to use public transportation to try to reduce wear and tear on the road and mitigate impacts on the park as a whole.  
Thanks,  
Carolyn Whiting

Reading MA 01867

Check out the new AOL. Most comprehensive set of free safety and security tools, free access to millions of high-quality videos from across the web, free AOL Mail and more.

X	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
RT	#S	LT	DT	UT	IA	IR	OR	TS	



11/24/2006 06:29 PM  
PST

To: <yose\_planning@nps.gov>  
cc:  
Subject: Possible Closure of El Portal Road

RECEIVED  
EPR-10-S  
NOV 28 2006  
P. 181  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

To Whom It May Concern:

I strongly recommend that the El Portal Road be repaired and reinforced immediately so that people coming in, like myself from 120 and 140 can come into the valley any time the valley is open.

We like to come to Yosemite in late Spring or early Summer and to and we live in El Dorado County in California, and we always take 120 into the valley. If the El Portal road is closed, we would NOT be able to visit Yosemite except to go clear down to Fresno and come in from the South. In fact, that would be the ONLY entrance into Yosemite, because 120 and 140 would be closed, and coming over Tioga Pass through Crane Flat, would not be passable either. The Southern route from Fresno, would be the ONLY entrance in. So I'm recommending, that the repair and reinforcement job be started IMMEDIATELY. I am sure that the WACKO environmentalist, who have put a stop to the repair, LOVE the closure, so that nobody but THEMSELVES can get in. I'm sure that they would like to close the WHOLE valley. They said back in '98 that when we lost 300+ camping spaces to flooding, that they were going to let those spaces return to "Natural" habitat. These were obvious LIES, because as we ALL can see, the north and south campgrounds have been destroyed by heavy equipment and piles of dirt and gravel. We have also seen people on dirt bikes using the mounds as jumps. What should have been done, is these campgrounds been repaired for minimal amount of money for the general public, instead of rebuilding and adding to Yosemite Lodge, which only the rich can afford. Yosemite Lodge should have never been rebuilt and added to. It is not natural. The 300 campground spaces that were taken away, were more natural. The flooding that occurred was rare, but was a good excuse for the WACKO environmentalist to close Yosemite down and prevent people from visiting.

As stated previously, build and repair El Portal Road ASAP!

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Howard M. Bryant Jr.

Placerville, CA 95667

P.S. I am an environmentalist, and conservationist, but not a RADICAL, WACKO one!!

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EPK-11-5

NOV 28 2006

Mr. Robert Newgard

P. 182  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Hoffman Estates, Illinois  
Nov. 21st, 2006.

Dear Mr. Superintendent:-

I was startled to  
learn from your mailing  
that the Merced River  
Plan must be done over  
again.

That being the  
case, it is  
wise to do the  
1-mile section



Compliments of Girls' Town / Or Chadash

immediately. <sup>EPR-11-8 p.232</sup> The danger of the road suffering imminent failure is not worth gambling with.

Please add my name to the park's planning list. (I have no e-mail.) I would like to receive the Planning Update newsletter as well as planning-related notices. Thanks.

Regards,

Mr. Robert A. Newgard

Hoffman Estates, IL 60192-1312

Bob.

**PEPC**

Planning, Environment and Public Comment

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior[Home](#)[Parks](#)[Projects/Search](#)[Reports](#)[Tools](#)[Admin](#)**[Project Home](#)****[1 Project Setup](#)****[2 Funding](#)****[3 Internal Scoping / IDT Tasks](#)****[4 Natural/Cultural Compliance](#)****[5 Internal Documents](#)****[6 Public Communication](#)****[7 Public Documents & Comment Analysis](#)****[Documents](#)**[Document Details](#)[Correspondence](#)[Public Requests](#)[Comments](#)[Content Analysis Report](#)[Concerns](#)[Responses](#)[Sub/Non-Sub Report](#)[Index By Org. Type Report](#)[Index By Code Report](#)[Concern Response Report](#)[Manage Codes for Entire Project](#)[View | Edit](#)[Entire Project Code Analysis Report](#)[Demographics Report](#)**[8 Close Project](#)**[YOSE > El Portal Road Reconstruction \(16959\) > Public Documents > Public Scoping for El Portal Road Reconstruction > Correspondence](#)**Correspondence (192964)****Author Information**

**Keep Private:** No  
**Name:** Janet Bibby  
**Organization:** Supervisor/Mariposa Cnty  
**Organization Type:** I - Unaffiliated Individual  
**Address:** Post Office Box 784  
 Mariposa, CA 95338  
 USA  
**E-mail:** jbibby@mariposacounty.org

**RECEIVED**  
*EPR-12-S*  
 DEC 05 2006  
*p. 1 of 2*  
**YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK**

**Correspondence Information**

**Status:** New **Park Correspondence Log:**  
**Date Sent:** 12/04/2006 **Date Received:** 12/04/2006  
**Number of Signatures:** 1 **Form Letter:** No  
**Contains Request(s):** No **Type:** Web Form  
**Notes:**

**Correspondence Text**

December 4, 2006

U. S. Dept. of the Interior  
 National Park Service  
 Park Planning (Yosemite National Park)

Re: Project Comments

Dear Park Planning and Comment Review Div.:

It is imperative that any threat concerning access to Yosemite National Park be removed. Currently, access is limited due to the Ferguson Rock Slide at El Portal on Highway 140, which is extremely concerning to emergency personnel and response times. While temporarily cooperated and the one-lane bridge at El Portal has helped to lessen emergency concerns, we recognize that all Park Service entrances must be maintained for non security purposes, natural disaster evacuations, and the overall health and safety of Yosemite, Park Service personnel, and residents utilizing alternative routes.

Therefore, I urge all planning staff, individuals in support and opposition, to recognize the importance of all access routes to Yosemite National Park in developing a solution that does not jeopardize the environment but that also does not create a health and safety risk. A solution must be achieved, in that historically we have learned that alternate routes are the single most important emergency infrastructure for the preservation of life in a disaster situation.

Respectfully submitted,

<i>C</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>per</i>	<i>web</i>	<i>gort</i>				
RT	#S	LT	DT	UT	IA	IR	OR	TS

EPR-12-5  
P.2072

JANET BIBBY  
Mariposa County Supervisor, District III  
Post Office Box 784  
Mariposa, CA 95338  
209-966-3222

Claude P. Benedix

Danville CA 94526-1510

November 30, 2006

RECEIVED

EPR-13-5

DEC 05 2006

P. 10/1

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Superintendent  
Attn: El Portal Road Reconstruction  
- Pohono Bridge to Big Oak Flat Road Intersection.  
P. O. Box 577  
Yosemite CA 95389

The fact that the subject section of road (Segment D) has not been upgraded appears to be the result of obstructionist objectors who rarely offer any positive solutions. That short mile of road is a disgrace to the YNP road system. Since Segment D has been repeatedly delayed the incremental costs of repair and upgrading have certainly increased significantly.

It is inexcusable that the environmentalists have used the courts to block this needed reconstruction and that it has not been accomplished virtually 10 years after the 1997 flood. Especially since Congress deemed YNP sufficiently important to allocate funds for needed reconstruction.

Having said that, although Segment D is in fact in the Wild and Scenic Merced River Zone, the reality is that it is a principal access route to Yosemite Valley and an essential utility corridor. Segments A, B, and C, from El Portal to the Big Oak Flat Intersection were upgraded after many years of design, hearings, debates, objections and positive arguments. That reconstruction and upgrade has certainly enhanced and protected the scenic qualities of the Merced River (virtually as close to the River as the portion remaining in Segment D), while also providing a safer access route and utility corridor. The same efforts should be expended to upgrade this last segment. Several low impact, parking turnouts are certainly possible in this last section.

A particular design effort is needed to make the junction of the Big Oak Flat Intersection with El Portal Road safer for pedestrians crossing traffic from the North side parking area to view the River. Several options probably exist: a.) relocate the parking area to the south side of the road, or b.) install architectural barriers (rock walls) to channel pedestrians to a well marked crossing, perhaps enhanced with pedestrian activated pavement flashers.

It can't happen too soon! Thanks for listening.

Sincerely,

*Claude Benedix*  
Claude P. Benedix

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# Yosemite National Park

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## PUBLIC COMMENT FORM El Portal Road Reconstruction - Pohono Bridge to Big Oak Flat Intersection

RECEIVED  
EPR-14-5  
DEC 05 2006  
P. 10/1  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

All interested individuals, organizations, and agencies are invited to provide written ideas, concerns, or suggestions during the public scoping period, which closes December 28, 2006. Written comments may be mailed to: Superintendent, Yosemite National Park, P.O. Box 577, Yosemite, CA 95389 (Attn: El Portal Road Reconstruction - Pohono Bridge to Big Oak Flat Intersection). Written comments may also be faxed to: 209/379-1294. Electronic comments may be emailed to: [Yose\\_Planning@nps.gov](mailto:Yose_Planning@nps.gov) (in the subject line type: El Portal Road Reconstruction). Comments can also be submitted online by going to [parkplanning.nps.gov/yose](http://parkplanning.nps.gov/yose). Keep track of project status by regularly visiting the park's web site at [www.nps.gov/yose/planning](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning). Thank you for your input!

**Note:** Anonymous comments will not be considered. Generally, The National Park Service will make all submissions available to the public for inspection. Individuals' street and email addresses will be withheld from publication of comments; however names may be made available. Comments may be published in planning documents, on the park's website, or in other materials.

Name: JOHN BARAN Date of Comment: 11-29-06  
Address: [REDACTED] CHATSWORTH, CA. 91311

### Comments

I would like see the projects in the valley start back-up as soon as possible, hopefully tomorrow before this delay causes more delays. Why does the Sierra Club have so much power? Who are they and who do they think they are?

John Baran  
visitor since 1972

RT	#S	LT	DT	UT	IA	IR	OR	TS
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(continue comments on back of page)

# Yosemite National Park

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## **PUBLIC COMMENT FORM** **El Portal Road Reconstruction -** **Pohono Bridge to Big Oak Flat Intersection**

RECEIVED  
EPR-15-3  
DEC 05 2006  
P. 1081  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

All interested individuals, organizations, and agencies are invited to provide written ideas, concerns, or suggestions during the public scoping period, which closes **December 28, 2006**. Written comments may be mailed to: Superintendent, Yosemite National Park, P.O. Box 577, Yosemite, CA 95389 (Attn: El Portal Road Reconstruction - Pohono Bridge to Big Oak Flat Intersection). Written comments may also be faxed to: 209/379-1294.

Electronic comments may be emailed to: [Yose\\_Planning@nps.gov](mailto:Yose_Planning@nps.gov) (in the subject line type: El Portal Road Reconstruction). Comments can also be submitted online by going to [parkplanning.nps.gov/yose](http://parkplanning.nps.gov/yose). Keep track of project status by regularly visiting the park's web site at [www.nps.gov/yose/planning](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning). Thank you for your input!

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Name: Bill King Date of Comment: 11-30-06  
Address: [REDACTED], MARIPOSA CA 95338

### Comments

- BUILD the option which will best withstand the next flood.
- prefer to maintain the narrow width.
- find a more varied "rock" wall mold - current is too linear - unnatural looking.

I	I	W	W	X				
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(continue comments on back of page)

# Yosemite National Park

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## **PUBLIC COMMENT FORM** **El Portal Road Reconstruction -** **Pohono Bridge to Big Oak Flat Intersection**

**RECEIVED**

*EPR-16-S*

DEC 05 2006

*p. 1 of 1*  
**YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK**

All interested individuals, organizations, and agencies are invited to provide written ideas, concerns, or suggestions during the public scoping period, which closes December 28, 2006. Written comments may be mailed to: Superintendent, Yosemite National Park, P.O. Box 577, Yosemite, CA 95389 (Attn: El Portal Road Reconstruction - Pohono Bridge to Big Oak Flat Intersection). Written comments may also be faxed to: 209/379-1294. Electronic comments may be emailed to: [Yose\\_Planning@nps.gov](mailto:Yose_Planning@nps.gov) (in the subject line type: El Portal Road Reconstruction). Comments can also be submitted online by going to [parkplanning.nps.gov/yose](http://parkplanning.nps.gov/yose). Keep track of project status by regularly visiting the park's web site at [www.nps.gov/yose/planning](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning). Thank you for your input!

**Note:** Anonymous comments will not be considered. Generally, The National Park Service will make all submissions available to the public for inspection. Individuals' street and email addresses will be withheld from publication of comments; however names may be made available. Comments may be published in planning documents, on the park's website, or in other materials.

Name: LEROY RADANOVICH Date of Comment: 11-30-06  
Address: [REDACTED] MARIPOSA, CA 95336

### Comments

THE PARK SERVICE SHOULD REBUILD THIS SECTION  
USING THE BEST TECHNOLOGY FOR A PERMANENT SOLUTION  
AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
RT	#S	LT	DT	UT	IA	IR	OR	TS	

(continue comments on back of page)



CHRIS MODIN

To: yosemite <yose\_planning@nps.gov>

CC:

Subject:

12/13/2006 09:13 AM  
PST

Superintendent, Yosemite National Park  
Public Scooping  
Emergency Road Repair Segment "D"  
P.O. Box 577  
Yosemite, Ca. 95398

RECEIVED  
EPR-17-S  
DEC 14 2006  
P. 103  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

December 12, 2006

Dear Sir:

Emergency repairs are urgently needed on a limited section of roadway identified as Segment "D" entering Yosemite Valley just east of the highway 140/120 intersection. The deteriorated road section begins at the 140/120 intersection and extends east approximately 900 feet along a very narrow corridor between nearly vertical granite cliffs and precipitous drop off to the Merced River. This deteriorated section presents a serious public safety issue, and in the event of complete failure would leave Yosemite Valley accessible, perhaps for weeks or months, only from the Fresno area to the south. The remaining portion of segment "D" extending east to the Pohono Bridge is to remain out of the scope of this project.

Following are some suggestions that might help expedite repairs to this seriously degraded road section.

1. Begin temporary emergency repairs now to prevent further degradation or complete failure that could occur as soon as the onset of heavy weather.
2. Permanent repairs would begin following high water in '07 and should be designed to maintain the present historic character of segment "D"; ten foot driving lanes with one foot wide paved shoulders. This permanent repair should not include preliminary engineering or design that would enable a future widening of segment "D" to continue to the Pohono bridge one mile east. The rational and compelling need for widening segment "D" to the recently upgraded standards in the steep narrow winding canyon west of the 140/120 intersection does not apply to the almost level gentle curves that characterize segment "D" east of the 140/120 intersection. Federal highway standards that normally call for wider lanes and shoulders on a road this heavily traveled do allow for deviations from these standards when historic, cultural, or outstanding resource values would be significantly

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ER-17-S  
p. 203

impacted by those improvements. This is an area where deviating from the higher standards are justified and appropriate. We can avoid great public controversy if the historic alignment of segment "D" remains fundamentally unchanged.

3. The existing alignment along an especially narrow section of roadway perhaps 200 feet long where vertical granite cliffs in the west bound lane and a precipitous drop off to the Merced river in the east bound lane result in an unacceptable frequency of center line collisions resulting in broken mirrors and damaged vehicles. The roadbed width in this relatively short section is extremely narrow and needs to be widened minimally to alleviate this public safety and collision problem at this very narrow point. Widen the roadbed in this short section to allow safe passage for large vehicles while maintaining the historic ten-foot driving lanes and one foot paved shoulders that are the standard in Yosemite Valley. The extended width area could be surfaced with gravel or other material not suitable for driving and would allow motorists a sufficient psychological buffer between cliff and drop off to prevent these frequent centerline incursions.

4. Efforts should be made to preserve the large heritage canyon live oak located in an especially problematic and narrow section between river and cliff. The tree could be saved by reconstructing the permanent retaining wall further into the river around its base and would be a definite preferred alternative to tree removal. At the tree's location the granite cliffs in the westbound lane are not vertical and it appears that the roadbed could be extended north here as needed without significant impacts to sensitive resources. The tree would be saved and the widening would alleviate the problem of side swipe collisions at this point where the current driving lanes may be even less than 10 feet wide. Also, the tree leans at a considerable angle out over the river away from vehicles with extended mirrors. This would allow the driving lane and paved shoulder to extend essentially to the base of the tree, lessening the need for extensive widening to the north in the westbound lane. It's a great looking canyon oak and I think it can be saved.

5. I've heard of suggestions by some that no action should be undertaken to make these repairs until a new MRP is completed. It's extremist thinking (or not thinking) and should not even be considered.

Thanks for listening.

John and Chris Modin

El Dorado Hills CA. 95762

EPR-17~~2~~5

p. 323

12/10/06

Dear Yosemite National Park,

RECEIVED  
EPR-18-S  
DEC 18 2006  
P. 181  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Re: D 6215 (YOSE-PM) - EL Portal Road

Re construction:

Please do your job and follow the law and develop a valid plan to protect the Merced river.

This does not involve a roadway closer to the river, new hotels + motels (fancy or otherwise), RV hook-ups, more pavement etc. As our population increases, undeveloped areas become more precious. The only appropriate construction other than the road would be a few picnic areas.

Please keep it as undeveloped as possible.

Thank You

Lena Pennington

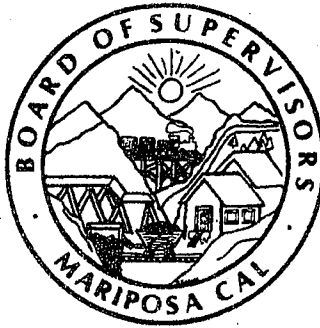
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Bayside CA 95524-9303

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# Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

District 1 ..... LEE STETSON  
District 2 ..... LYLE TURPIN  
District 3 ..... JANET BIBBY  
District 4 ..... DIANNE FRITZ  
District 5 ..... BOB PICKARD



RICHARD J. BENSON  
County Administrative Officer

MARGIE WILLIAMS  
Clerk of the Board

P.O. Box 784  
MARIPOSA, CALIFORNIA 95338  
(209) 966-3222  
1-800-736-1252  
FAX (209) 966-5147  
www.mariposacounty.org/board

December 12, 2006

Superintendent Michael Tollefson  
Yosemite National Park  
Post Office Box 577  
Yosemite, California 95389

RECEIVED  
EPR-19-S  
DEC 19 2006

P. 1071  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

RE: El Portal Road Reconstruction - Pohono Bridge to Big Oak Flat Road Intersection

Dear Superintendent Tollefson:

The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors is greatly concerned about the timeframe of the El Portal Road Reconstruction. This matter if not addressed as promptly as possible could create irrevocable harm to our County's tourism based industries and the regional communities who are vitally linked to Yosemite National Park.

It seemed absolutely clear at the Mariposa public scoping session on Thursday, November 30th, that the potential (and all too likely) collapse of the roadbed would be economically devastating to our County. Our recent experience with the closure of Highway 140 due to the rockslide was a severe blow to our tourist season and to have three of the four access roads to Yosemite Valley closed to our visitors would clearly dwarf that impact.

While the long-term fix is still being evaluated, it is our understanding that the National Park Service (NPS) expects to focus on some short-term patch work, probably commencing in the Fall of 2007. Again, as mentioned above, if a collapse were to occur it would have a catastrophic effect on the economic viability for not only Mariposa County but for much of the surrounding region as well. Therefore the County of Mariposa strongly supports any means possible in accelerating the timeframe for either a short-term fix or for a major reconstruction of the one-mile segment of the El Portal Road from Big Oak Flat Road Intersection to the Pohono Bridge. It is imperative that health and safety not be jeopardized throughout this process. Further, we support a construction process that allows the road to remain open, with as little delay to our residents (commuters) and visitors as is practical.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this very critical matter and please contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

LEE STETSON  
Chairman

LS/BP/mbh

C	I	L	U	G	O	R			
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cc: Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Senator Barbara Boxer  
Congress Member George Radanovich



**Mariposa County  
Board of Supervisors**

P.O. BOX 784  
MARIPOSA, CALIFORNIA 95338



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0004304284 DEC 13 2006  
MAILED FROM ZIP CODE 95338

Superintendent Michael Tollefson  
Yosemite National Park  
P.O. Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 95389

3334340377-77 3004

RECEIVED

EPR-20-5

DEC 19 2006

P.1081

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Attention: **Superintendent Michael Tollefson**

Date: 12/15/2006

Company: Yosemite National Park

Number of Pages: 1

Fax Number: 372-0220

Voice Number:

From: **Brad & Irene Aborn**

Company: Flying A Ranch

Fax Number: 209-742-5118

Voice Number:

Subject: Road Reconstruction Pohono Bridge to Big Oak Flat

**Comments:**

Dear Superintendent Tollefson:

In reference to your letter of Dec. 12th, I am replying to urge the National Park to take all means necessary to expediate emergency repairs along that section of the Highway 140 corridor. In light of the recent Ferguson slide, the Yosemite National Park doesn't need a catastrophic situation which would certainly circle the globe through the news media. If the road is washed out there is a very good chance of the sewer line polluting the Merced River and severing all the roads to the Park except for Highway 41. El Portal could be isolated if we also have a road closure at the Ferguson slide site.

Sincerely, Brad Aborn, Supervisor Elect Dist. 1

C	I	L	F	608				
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Sturges.Susan@epamail.epa.gov

12/20/2006 09:03 AM PST

To: yose\_planning@nps.gov  
cc: Blazej.Nova@epamail.epa.gov, Geselbracht.Jeanne@epamail.epa.gov  
Subject: Scoping Comments for the El Portal Road Rehabilitation, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California, 12/20/2006

RECEIVED

2PR-21-5

DEC 20 2006

P. 1072

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

December 20, 2006

To: Mr. Mike Tollefson, Superintendent, Yosemite National Park  
From: Susan Sturges, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 9  
Environmental Review Office

Subject: Scoping Comments for the El Portal Road Rehabilitation, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Federal Register Notice of Scoping published on November 14, 2006, requesting comments on the El Portal Road Rehabilitation Project, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California. The notice, dated August 29, 2006, indicates that the decision on whether to develop an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has not been made. The original scope of the project was the completion of the Highway 140 improvements on a one-mile segment of El Portal Road, between Big Oak Flat Road to the Pohono Bridge, which was extensively damaged in 1997 by floods.

Based on a December 14, 2006 telephone conversation with Mr. Mark Butler of your staff and information on the park's El Portal Road Rehabilitation website, EPA is aware that the project scope is greatly reduced to address the imminent risk of road failure and that the long term fix for the entire one-mile segment is no longer proposed at this time. The project scope is limited to approximately 300 yards of the road where a dry-stacked wall was damaged in an area known as "The Narrows". The park has also determined that an EA is appropriate to assess the proposal's environmental effects under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

EPA understands that the project area is restricted by steep topography. However, as you consider the long term rehabilitation of El Portal Road and other roadway projects or developments in the park, EPA recommends incorporating innovative solutions to address stormwater and other impacts roads have on the natural environment. EPA and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have come together in the Green Highways Partnership, a voluntary public/private initiative to integrate transportation functionality and ecological sustainability. Green Highways are defined by an effort to leave the project area "better than before" through community partnering, environmental stewardship, and transportation network improvements in safety and functionality. For innovative solutions to address stormwater or ideas on low impact development, please visit the Green Highways Partnership website at <http://www.greenhighways.org/dev/practices.cfm>.

Once a decision is made to complete rehabilitation on El Portal Road and an EIS is considered, EPA is interested in providing comments on the long-term project. Please provide three copies of the Draft EIS to Environmental Protection Agency Region 9, Environmental Review Office, 75 Hawthorne Street (CED-2), San Francisco, California 94105. If you have any questions or comments on this memo, you may contact me at Sturges.Susan@epa.gov or (415) 947-4188. Thank you for

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the opportunity to comment on the scope of the project.



12/26/2006 04:42 PM  
PST

To: Yose\_Planning@nps.gov  
CC:  
Subject: Scoping Comments for Segment D, El Portal Road, El Portal Road  
Big Oak Flat Road Intersection

RECEIVED  
EPR-23-5  
DEC 27 2006

P.1072  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Dec. 26, 2006

RE: Scoping for Emergency Road Repairs (referred to confusingly in NPS document as "El Portal Road Reconstruction", Comments due Dec. 28 or 29, 2006

Dear National Park Service planners:

As a member of the public long interested in the management of Yosemite Valley, I have received your document dated 11-06 regarding plans for Segment D of the El Portal Road.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments.

My first note, is to express some confusion over what it is you have in mind. The description of the project under "Why undertake this project now?" explains that the current project is "to address the immediate risk to health and safety and develop a long-term solution for those portions of the road currently being undercut by the river."

This sounds to me like two separate things: the first one is to address the immediate risks...due to undercutting a portion of the roadway by the river. Planning a long-term solution would be a second separate thing.

I think the first thing you need to make clear to the interested public is to separate these two aspects, (repair being the first) and only the second of which could justifiably be considered "reconstruction". I firmly believe that Segment D, which I have traversed many times, in most weather and traffic conditions, does NOT need major reconstruction along the lines of the grossly widened ;lower segments of the El Portal Road, a massive engineering project that devastated the historic character of the old road as well as disturbed lamentably the Merced River corridor.

I am pleased to read in the current document that, "important considerations ...will be to maintain the road's essential historic character as a winding, narrow mountain road, and to consider the protection and enhancement of the Wild and Scenic River."

Let me applaud the NPS's stating the crux of the issue so firmly and succinctly and let me urge the NPS truly to keep to that premise. It indicates the NPS's good will in keeping what is important in Yosemite. To me, the fulfillment of that pledge will be the essence of whether the agency is to be supported or not in the current project. I strongly support emergency repairs to portions of the roadway that are being undermined, and I am pleased the NPS is proceeding with this important project.

However, I urge you not to mix up a "reconstruction" (which I do not believe that segment D is in need of) with the emergency "repairs". I would not support any widening of the roadbed as a "long-term solutions", as I believe the narrowness of the present road is "an essential part of its historic character". Arguments I believe that some in NPS have made to the effect that large buses must need to pass one another and therefore the

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ERR-23-5  
p.2072

road must be widened to facilitate their passage seem spurious. Indeed, once NPS is able to proceed with its laudable plan to substitute shuttle buses for the automobiles driven in by most of the day users to the Valley, there will be far fewer vehicles, and road widening will be even less needed than now! True, buses must once in a while pass each other; they simply need to be required to slow down. (Thus giving their passengers the benefit of seeing the park scenery even better. If 35 mph seems too high a speed for this historic roadway, then make it 25 mph for those few miles. Or slower, if need be. But do not justify a massive "reconstruction" project in any manner, when I believe all we should be talking about is an "emergency repair."

Those are two different things. I strongly support the emergency repair, without any general roadbed widening. I strongly oppose any reconstruction project that calls for widening the roadbed.

(I have driven the lower segments of the reconstructed El Portal Road many times, and lament, each time, at the loss of historic character, through the widening that was done. Where the road is somewhat straighter, due to curves being "straightened" there especially I feel it is now less safe, as cars are tempted to go faster. Speed kills. Speed causes accidents to be more severe—even if possibly fender benders might arguably be less frequent.

Thank you for considering these comments; I look forward to working with you on future stages of this and other projects to enhance the natural scenery of the incomparable Valley and the public's appropriate enjoyment of it.

Sincerely,

Vicky Hoover

[REDACTED]  
San Francisco, CA 94109  
[REDACTED]

**TRANSPORTATION INVOLVES EVERYONE (TIE)****Yosemite Field Office****P. O. Box 167****Midpines, CA 95345****(209) 742-6780****(209) 722-4558**

December 26, 2006

**RECEIVED**

EPR-24-S

DEC 27 2006

P. 1082

**YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK**

Mr. Michael J. Tollefson, Superintendent  
 Yosemite National Park  
 U.S. Department of the Interior, National  
 Park Service  
 P.O. Box 577  
 Yosemite, CA 95389

Re: Scoping: El Portal Road Re-  
 Construction—Pohono Bridge  
 to Big Oak Flat Road Inter-  
 section

Dear Mr. Tollefson:

TIE's response to the correction issues raised by the damaged extension of Highways 140 and 120 into Yosemite Valley: Expedite. Expedite. Expedite.

There is greater threat to public safety in the damaged El Portal Road segment that when the U.S. Forest Service recently achieved exemption from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) over a downriver situation. Premise for the Forest Service-initiated exemption to allow cross-canyon transfer of high-voltage electrical transmission lines from the head of the Ferguson rockslide was to reduce wildfire risk.

In El Portal Road Section D there is overt evidence that lack of correction, most certainly to include road replacement and the introduction of cantilevered support, poses a threat to the lives of travelers. Transportation Involves Everyone (TIE) urges that the full 1.1-mile damaged section of El Portal Road be corrected forthwith.

Every option must be exercised to as quickly as possible reverse the threat to public safety. There also is substantial risk to the Merced River's wild and scenic characteristics from the likely disruption of the adjoining 14-inch sewage line in collapse or dislocation of the roadway. Such failure becomes more likely with every day that passes.

Even without factors of erosion associated with the 1997 flood and elimination of protective backwaters brought about by the removal of Cascade Dam, the rock wall providing much of the support for the embankment is problematic. Most probably it was pieced together in the 1880s or 1890s, lacking any mortar, grouting or concrete.

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EPR-24-5  
P-2072

Pg. 2/Letter to Superintendent Michael J. Tollefson  
December 26, 2006

Re: Scoping: El Portal Road Reconstruction—Pohono Bridge to Big Oak Flat  
Road Intersection

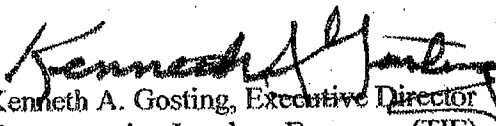
In event of a moderate to severe earthquake, even with epicenter outside the national park, the rock wall support is likely to dramatically fail because such unreinforced rock walls differentially deflect seismic wave motion. What is believed to be the most powerful seismic event in the recorded history of California—at least after arrival of Spanish expeditions—was the 1872 Great Owens Valley Earthquake. John Muir documented significant changes to the landscape of Yosemite that occurred in the 1872 quake.

Aside from the 300-yard to 350-yard segment of El Portal Road identified by Park Service planning staff as moribund, risk in the rest of the 1.1-mile zone shouldn't be ignored. Culvert deformation was listed as a primary factor in the deaths of 14 people, along with another 30 being trapped, at Camp Sophia in the San Bernardino National Forest on Christmas Day, 2003. Planning staff reported in the November 30 session at the Mariposa Government Center about El Portal Road that deformed culverts were among deficiencies in the overall 1.1-mile troubled Section D in Yosemite.

If corrective reconstruction is performed absent the pressures of imminent collapse or following an actual catastrophic failure, opportunity can be created for keeping the segment open to traffic during construction. Space on El Portal Road for traffic to bypass the construction zone could be more carefully created than in any rushed reaction following a failure.

An expedited, but orderly replacement of the imperiled roadway segment will have far less environmental consequences than would come amid post-failure pressures to hastily re-open the highway.

Sincerely,

  
Kenneth A. Gosting, Executive Director  
Transportation Involves Everyone (TIE)

Transportation Involves Everyone (TIE) is a public education and policy analysis organization active under non-profit sponsorship statewide and nationally.





RECEIVED  
EPR-25-S  
DEC 28 2006  
P.1031  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

December 15, 2006

Michael J. Tollefson, Superintendent  
U. S. Dept. of Interior, National Park Service  
Yosemite National Park  
P. O. Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 95389

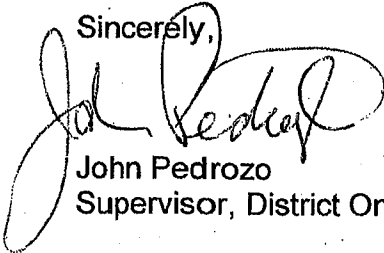
Dear Mr. Tollefson:

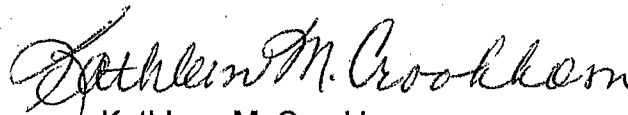
The Merced County Board of Supervisors is in receipt of your letter dated November 9, 2006 announcing the opening of public scoping for the El Portal Road Reconstruction.

The Merced County Board of Supervisors would like to issue this letter in strong support of the El Portal Road Reconstruction which is a road link in Yosemite Valley to three park entrances. It is clear that any road failure would endanger motorists, greatly restrict emergency access to park areas, expose the Merced River to pollution from road debris and prohibit access to Yosemite Valley from three to four park entrances. In addition, this impact would create hardships for all outlying communities that are Gateways to Yosemite.


Thank you for the opportunity to voice our support on this needed project.


Sincerely,

  
John Pedrozo  
Supervisor, District One

  
Kathleen M. Crookham  
Supervisor, District Two

Deidre F. Kelsey  
Supervisor, District Four

  
Jerry O'Banion  
Supervisor, District Five

  
Michael G. Nelson  
Supervisor, District Three

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## Board of Supervisors

John Pedrozo  
Supervisor, District One

Kathleen M. Crookham  
Supervisor, District Two

Michael G. Nelson  
Supervisor, District Three

Deidre F. Kelsey  
Supervisor, District Four

Jerry O'Banion  
Supervisor, District Five

Demitrios O. Tatum  
County Executive Officer

Merced County  
Administration Building  
2222 "M" Street  
Merced, CA 95340  
(209) 385-7366  
(209) 726-7977 Fax  
[www.co.merced.ca.us](http://www.co.merced.ca.us)

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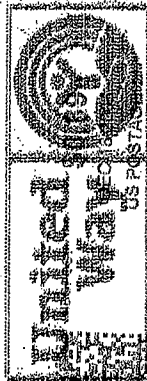


Board of Supervisors  
2222 "M" Street  
Merced, CA 95340

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

STOCKTON/STUK

18 DEC 2006 PM 1:11



US POSTAGE  
FIRST CLASS  
MAILED FROM 95340  
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Michael J. Tollefson, Superintendent  
U. S. Dept of Interior, Nat'l Park Serv  
Yosemite National Park  
P. O. Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 9te89

95340340377





Calvin Liu  
12/28/2006 11:05 AM  
PST

To: YOSE Planning@NPS  
cc:  
Subject: Fw: Segment "D" Scoping Comments

ttfn,

Calvin Liu  
(209) 372-0288

RECEIVED  
EPR-26-3  
DEC 28 2006  
P. 1871  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

----- Forwarded by Calvin Liu/YOSE/NPS on 12/28/2006 11:04 AM -----



"Brian & Lynn Mattos"  
[Redacted]  
12/28/2006 10:49 AM  
PST

To: Michael\_Tollefson@NPS.GOV  
cc: Calvin\_Liu@NPS.GOV  
Subject: Segment "D" Scoping Comments

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this emergency road repair project.

This road is extremely important to visitor access.

This road is extremely important to park operations.

Please select a design alternative that is sustainable, reasonable, fits with the existing character of the El Portal Road and will fit seamlessly into the eventual reconstruction of the remainder of Segment "D". Masonry walls seem appropriate; cantilever engineering does not.

I believe that prudent reconstruction of all of segment "D" best protects outstandingly remarkable values of the Merced Wild and Scenic River.

Brian Mattos  
Park Neighbor

[Redacted]  
Fish Camp, CA 93623

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George Whitmore  
<geowhit1954@comcast.net>

12/28/2006 11:39 PM  
PST

To: yose\_planning@nps.gov  
cc:  
Subject: El Portal Road Project

Sierra Club  
c/o: George Whitmore  
P.O. Box 5572  
Fresno, CA 93755  
geowhit1954@comcast.net

RECEIVED  
EPR-27-3  
DEC 29 2006  
P.1074  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

27 December 2006

Superintendent  
Yosemite National Park  
ATTN: El Portal Road Reconstruction---Pohono Bridge to the Big Oak  
Flat Road Intersection Project  
P.O. Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 95389

Fax: 209/379-1294

This is being e-mailed to: yose\_planning@nps.gov

Sir:

The following comments are submitted on behalf of the Sierra Club. Thank you for this opportunity to make suggestions which hopefully will be of use to you in your efforts to protect the visitor experience and the natural resources of Yosemite National Park.

These are scoping comments intended to identify issues which we believe your planning processes should address for the "El Portal Road Reconstruction---Pohono Bridge to the Big Oak Flat Road Intersection Project."

NPS staff tells us that one of the purposes of scoping is to identify the scope of the project. However, statements made during the November site visit and quotes appearing in the media make it quite clear that the NPS has entered into this process with the mindset that the road must be widened. In fact, we have also been told that if we think it should not be widened, we should present our reasons at this time. This seems to go beyond a normal scoping process in which issues are identified for study during the environmental review process, with a decision flowing from a process in which various alternatives have been considered.

The fact that a particular mindset has been adopted by park staff prior to public scoping indicates that something is terribly wrong with the way in which this project is being addressed.

As you well know, some of us spend huge amounts of time walking the ground, participating in Park Service events; and asking questions. Our opinions and recommendations are based on extensive first-hand knowledge of the resources and issues. The Sierra Club has an extensive record of having commented on Segment D going back at least into the late 1990's; and we are still in agreement with the position we have articulated regarding the El Portal Road for the

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EPR-27-5  
p. 286

past 8 years.

The title for this project has been changed several times over the past few months and although park staff has explained to us that the scope of this project "now has been recently narrowed" (following Judge Ishii's Nov. 3 injunction) to encompass just two sections of the mile long segment of the El Portal Road, the Federal Register notice does state that this project could extend for the entire one mile between the Big Oak Flat Road-El Portal Road intersection and the Pohono Bridge. Due to this ambiguity we will begin by commenting briefly on the design of the Highway 120-140 (Big Oak Flat Road-El Portal Road) intersection. It seems that the NPS should study the possibility of changing the location of the stop sign closely. Since Highway 120 carries more traffic during the summer, while 140 carries more traffic during the winter, we wonder if the stop sign could stay in its present location (120) during the winter, and then be moved to a new (140) location during the summer. By using previously disturbed ground, including the present parking area, it would be possible to redesign the intersection, including a possible turning/merging lane. Some very minor adjustments such as these would obviate the supposed need to widen the road for traffic safety, and without impinging upon the river channel.

In the comments which follow, we use the term "emergency" to mean a situation wherein time is of the essence, and delay could have serious undesirable consequences. We use the term "repair" to mean restoring something to its original standards and function without completely rebuilding it. We use the term "reconstruction" to mean taking something apart and rebuilding it to its original standards and function. We recognize that a longer lasting "repair" is sometimes achieved through a process of "reconstruction". But we believe that if the original road standards and function are exceeded, then a project goes beyond the definition of "repair/reconstruction" and becomes something new. Our use of these words is consistent with Standard English; however, we are concerned because the NPS has been using these words interchangeably when referring to this project in face to face conversation, written park planning announcements, and in the media. This misuse of the English language has resulted in public confusion regarding the current condition of the road and what a reasonable course of action for the park's NEPA process involving this stretch of road would entail. In view of this, we request that NPS take this confusion into account when evaluating public comments. How will NPS evaluate public comments when this scoping process has been tainted by such major ambiguities and misrepresentations?

-----

(1) We believe repairs should be done without further delay. Numerous statements have been made by the NPS implying that portions of Segment D are at imminent risk of collapse into the river. Mariposa county supervisors have expressed their concern and a local paper has reported to area residents that three years ago a report by the Federal Highway Administration stated that "collapse could occur at any time." Assuming these warnings are valid, logic would indicate that the NPS has been derelict in not having addressed the problem in a more timely manner. Repair the road, repair it now, and please stop compromising public safety. For the NPS to say that ongoing litigation has prevented them from repairing the road appears to be an attempt to shift blame away from where it belongs by

EPR-27-5  
P-384

manipulating public opinion. The NPS is well aware that the courts have never prohibited repairs, and the NPS is well aware that repairs are not opposed by either the plaintiffs or other environmental organizations. Therefore it seems that regarding a small portion of Segment D of El Portal Road the NPS may be playing fast and loose with public safety in Yosemite.

(2) Repairs, by definition, should be limited to work done within the footprint of existing development.

(3) We have no problem with reconstructing the existing road to achieve a more permanent repair, as long as the work stays within the existing footprint. During the widening and straightening of Segments A, B, and C of the El Portal Road, much was made of the steep gradients and tight curves to justify the project. We note that neither of those constraints (steep gradients or tight curves) exists on Segment D, so an issue to be addressed is what would be the justification for going to the same widths as on Segments A, B, and C when the conditions on Segment D are quite different?

(4) If the park wishes to go beyond the existing footprint, they would be exceeding the definition of "repairs" and are then within the realm of new development. The park's own Environmental Assessment for the previous El Portal Road project states: "The purpose of park roads remains in sharp contrast to that of the federal and state highway systems. Park roads are not intended to provide fast and convenient transportation." (The purpose of a park road as summarized in the "Park Road Design" memorandum, February 20, 1986) The park document goes on to explain park policy on roads as such, "Park roads provide the main access to our National Parks. The distinctive character of these roads sets the stage for visitor experience in the park. These roads are designed with extreme care and sensitivity with respect to the natural, cultural, scenic, and recreational values through which they pass. Park roads are often narrow, winding, and steep, but it is these very attributes that define the distinctive park-like character of these roadways. The character of these roadways prepares visitors for all that lies beyond." (El Portal Road EA, Section 1 (Introduction), page 2). A statement in the NPS Fact Sheet (11/06) for this project states, "Important considerations.....will be to maintain the road's essential historic character as a winding, narrow mountain road....."

An issue to be addressed in your environmental review is how a decision to widen the road can be reconciled with the above statements of policy and intent.

To quote Kevin Cann, Assistant Superintendent, at a public meeting in February 2005, the NPS "might not have to widen" this section of road.

An issue to be addressed in your environmental review is why the NPS would go into this process with the clearly stated desire to widen the road, when the Assistant Superintendent, little more than a year and a half earlier, had said that it might not be necessary. What changed in that year and a half to bring about such a major difference in the NPS' approach to the project? There has to be a reason. To say, "We changed our mind," would sound arbitrary and capricious, so we are certain there must be some other reason. What is it?

Sometimes the desire to maintain a "uniform standard" is given

as a reason for widening and straightening a road. We note that "uniformity" is invariably defined in terms of on-the-ground linear measurements of driving lane width, shoulder width, radius of curves, etc. Such an approach ignores the supposed intent, which is usually to reduce the accident rate. Would it not be more logical to define uniformity in terms of accident rates, not linear measurements? If a section of road which happens to be narrow has an accident rate which is the same or less than that of a section of road which happens to be wider, then what purpose is served by widening the section of road which has the lower accident rate?

An issue to be addressed in the environmental review of this project is whether "safety" might better be defined in terms of accident rates, rather than on-the-ground linear measurements.

Another issue to be addressed is the severity of accidents; wider roads usually lead to higher vehicle speeds, which leads to more serious accidents. Is the NPS goal to have fewer accidents, even though more people will die?

Another issue to be addressed is alternative ways of reducing accident rates: (1) limiting vehicle size, (2) limiting number of vehicles at one time (i.e. crowding), (3) limiting speed, (4) special signs (e.g. "narrow road", "wildlife", etc.). These are merely examples. Please put your traffic engineers to work on this, and try to avoid the fixation on "wider is better".

(5) If going beyond the existing footprint is what the NPS has in mind, they may want to review the language in Judge Ishii's December 1999 ruling in which he clearly said anything beyond "sewer repairs and slope stabilization" would require a valid Merced River Plan; and ".....if the final form of work on Segment D is such that [it] would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, Defendants must prepare an EIS". (The timeline that has been projected by NPS for the Segment D environmental review, as well as other statements, suggests that an EA is anticipated, rather than an EIS.)

(6) If Yosemite National Park chooses to ignore the mandate of the Court, they should consider what the fallout, legal and otherwise, from that might be. A few obvious consequences would be further inconvenience of travel for park visitors and increased costs to the taxpayers; and both would be the direct responsibility of the NPS.

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-----  
We have been told widening of the critical section of road would involve removal of a very large live oak which is on the south (river side) edge of the pavement. Because the tree has grown to the south, toward the river and away from the road, vehicles do not strike it. We have also observed that the bank beneath the road is clearly not undercut by the river in the vicinity of this tree. However, widening the road even as little as one foot would necessitate removal of this tree. It is the only large tree along the south side of the entire 900 foot section in question. We have visualized what the roadside would look like if that tree were gone, replaced by a new faux-rock wall, and it would change the character of the road considerably. Any dispute over removing this centuries-old tree epitomizes a debate we find troubling in a place like Yosemite. Should widening the narrowest part of this road be the

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only issue, or are there perhaps other considerations? Like the fact that this is a National Park? A similar argument implying that protection of the resources is not a major consideration and that newer road "safety" standards should trump all other considerations was apparently applied to construction of the multi-level freeway interchange in Yellowstone near Old Faithful. That freeway interchange has existed for a number of years, but is now slated to be removed. In Yellowstone, the NPS could dismantle their mistake. But in Yosemite, it would not be possible to replace a centuries old live oak if it were later decided that its removal had been a mistake. What would the impacts be on the natural and cultural resources of removing this large tree from the bank of the Wild and Scenic Merced River? How would the absence of this tree and its substantial canopy affect the quality of the human environment and/or change the character of the El Portal Road?

The point is that, contrary to what some park staff has shared with us recently, it is not appropriate at this time to make a decision about removing this remarkable oak tree. Such a decision must be deferred to a future planning process, using a valid Merced River Comprehensive Management Plan as its basis.

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Since the interest in widening the road seems to be driven largely by the desire to accommodate increasingly larger and increasingly more numerous buses, we will conclude with the following observations. Issues to be addressed in the environmental review of this project should include the following.

In 1988 Yosemite's Superintendent John Morehead, in a memo to the Western Regional Director of NPS, recommended not to increase the amount of commercial bus traffic. And nearly two decades later we do not see how it is that Yosemite National Park could be any more ready for increased bus traffic, commercial or otherwise. Zion, a national park that now has a mass transit system in place for park visitors, notes that buses are heavy and hard on the roads, impacting maintenance budgets. We wonder if the present amount of bus travel currently allowed in Yosemite is prudent given the need for repair of this portion of road undermined by a wild and scenic river.

A shift to increased bus transportation would have a profound impact on social equity and the visitor experience in a park like Yosemite; and there is no question that conversion from auto-touring to bus touring will require construction of expansive infrastructure at significant cost to the environment and the taxpayer. At the close of 2006 we still do not have the answer to the question of whether or not an urban-designed bus system, arriving and departing with assembly-line frequency supported by significant infrastructure, is even an appropriate transportation solution in a place like Yosemite. Such a system would also negatively impact the natural resources and regional ecosystems that spill over onto the gateway corridors outside the park boundaries. We suspect that an urban one-size-fits-all approach to what amounts to seasonal traffic problems in a park like Yosemite would be a mistake. It would be irresponsible for the National Park Service planning process to dictate such sweeping access changes without first knowing the answer to this transportation conundrum unique to Yosemite. However, a park mass transit system emphasizing buses over cars, as envisioned in the



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p. 684

Yosemite Valley Plan, still apparently drives the road projects we are tracking in Yosemite. We feel it would be rash for Yosemite National Park to leap into standardizing all its roads in preparation for such a major transportation shift while still lacking a substantive user capacity strategy; and, when the courts have, yet again, invalidated its CMP for the Merced River.

Thank you for seeking public input on the El Portal Road Reconstruction---Pohono Bridge to the Big Oak Flat Road Intersection Project. We hope you find our comments to be useful, and that you take them into account.

George Whitmore, Chair  
Sierra Club's Yosemite Committee



"J McGraw"

To: yose\_planning@nps.gov

cc:

Subject: scoping comment: El Portal Road Rehabilitation project

12/28/2006 06:04 PM  
PST

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EPR-29-S

DEC 29 2006

P. 1081

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Superintendent, Yosemite National Park

ATTN: El Portal Road Rehabilitation project

The following is a scoping comment on the above-named project.

1) Only emergency repairs should be authorized on the El Portal Road portion known as Segment D until the NPS-Yosemite has submitted a valid Merced River Plan that addresses User Capacity.

2) Any emergency repairs to Segment D should be limited to within the existing road prism.

3) Judge Ishii's July 1999 ruling stated that anything beyond "sewer repairs and slope stabilization" would require a valid Merced River Plan. This needs to be an overriding concern.

4) The large Canyon Live Oak along the south side of the existing road where the road was originally built to go around this tree should not be removed. It has scenic, historic and other river-related values and should be preserved.

5) The November 14, 2006 Federal Register Notice, Vol. 71, No. 219 describing the proposed El Portal Road Rehabilitation project refers to "the one mile segment" rather than merely the abbreviated portion described at [www.nps.gov/yose/planning](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning) in the November 15, 2006 announcement entitled, "Yosemite National Park Announces Opening of Public Scoping for El Portal Road Reconstruction--Pohono Bridge to the Big Oak Flat Road Intersection". In consequence of this discrepancy and of the potentially much greater impacts implied, an EIS or Environmental Impact Statement should be prepared, not merely an EA or Environmental Assessment.

Regards,

Jeff McGraw

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Jen Nersesian

01/03/2007 01:53 PM  
PST

To: Mark Butler/YOSE/NPS@NPS, Mark Husbands/YOSE/NPS@NPS,  
Christine Geis/YOSE/NPS@NPS

cc:  
Subject: Fw: Road Repair

Please count this as an official public scoping comment for the EP Road project. I didn't see it until today, but it came in on December 20th.

---Jen

Jennifer T. Nersesian  
Management Assistant to the Superintendent  
Branch Chief, Public Involvement & Outreach  
Yosemite National Park  
PO Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 95389

209-372-0249---phone  
209-372-0220---fax

**RECEIVED**  
*EPR-32-S*  
**DEC 20 2006**  
*P. 1061*  
**YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK**

----- Forwarded by Jen Nersesian/YOSE/NPS on 01/03/2007 01:52 PM -----



"MCACI"  
<info@arts-mariposa.org>

12/20/2006 03:11 PM  
PST

To: <jen\_nersesian@nps.gov>  
cc:  
Subject: Road Repair

Dear Ms. Nersesian,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of the Mariposa County Arts Council, please accept this communiqué as our full endorsement for the repair and reconstruction of Section D of Highway 140. The risk to travelers, the inconvenience to our community members and employees of Yosemite as well as the economic impact of a road failure-closure far outweigh our concern for negative environmental impact.

To ignore this situation, and allow the situation to be exacerbated is to write a death sentence to the local economy, and Mariposa's business community. We respect and appreciate appropriate studies and legal compliance, but to ignore the problem and allow the road to erode, and possibly interrupt the sewage treatment process, is illogical and not in the best interest of public safety or environmental safety.

The Mariposa County Arts Council is substantially dependant upon tourists visiting Yosemite via Highway 140. Please keep us informed as to ways that we can positively impact the acceleration of this project.

Respectfully,

Donna Brownell  
Executive Director  
Mariposa County Arts Council, Inc.  
(209) 966-3155  
P.O. Box 2134  
Mariposa CA 95338

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**YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK**

December

Independent of  
National Part.

National Forest  
 Attention: El Portal Road Reconstruction Pohono Bridge  
 Oak Flat Road Intersection  
 PO Box 577 Yosemite California, 95389

Dear Mr. Tolletson, the widening of the road referenced

above → I ~~offer~~ oppose the ~~warning~~ meeting at the Mariposa right

I attended the  
on November 30, 2006

I attended the scope meeting on November 30, 2006.

① Information was incomplete, I asked what the lawsuit arguments were & what alternatives and reasons were given to halt the project. I am sure your staff would know yet there was secrecy. The only response I got was concern about the width of the road.

"You need to share all concerns with the public."

② If necessary - do with this section of the road; St. H. Ferguson mountain "fall" issue - take turns.

I got was concern about the  
"You" need to share all concerns with the  
② If necessary do with this section of the road;  
as you're doing with the Ferguson mountain "fall" issue.  
Have another look at a layout & go single file - take turns.  
I was unable to ask questions and make comments  
of the engineer involved in the

as you're doing I will have  
Have another visit at a light & go single for  
③ I was unable to ask questions and make comments  
when I phoned Mike Pieper (sp?) engineer involved in the  
project. He asked for my last name & then hang up -  
How very rude! I recommend your professionals  
be at the meetings - so they cannot hang up  
④ would planting trees and vegetation help  
support the wall without damaging the river?  
(contd).

How very rude! I recommend  
be at the meetings - so they cannot hang up  
(4) would planting trees and vegetation help  
support the wall without damaging the river?  
(contd).

# Life Planning

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(contd)

page two of three

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P-2083

El Portal Road reconstruction

December 25, 2006

⑤ would moving boulders and rocks and stabilizing these together with natural materials, including #④ be feasible?

⑥ How can you mimic nature? Conceptually it is deficient to put up a permanent barrier. Rivers are changing, are so powerful and we need to "flow" with it engineer wise. Some rivers cut holes - why not have holes in a barrier? & cracks

⑦ Do not repeat processes that have failed before? The US keeps building dams - this is ridiculous - for example. Alternative plans should include not trying to control the river.

⑧ I oppose a big fix - planning periodic flexible "fixes" makes sense to me because the river is dynamic - not static & not permanent - we need to change with it to protect it, "go with the flow"

⑨ If needed transfer utility & sewer lines elsewhere. As an anthropology major I always believe in looking at primitive technologies and historic methods - that might lead themselves to use the same or use their concepts. Piece meal solutions might be the best methods, as well. Are there materials for building that can be used not thought of before. Can certain materials be flooded with the standard ones. For example some Armenian churches

EPR-33-SP-343  
December 25, 2006

El Portal Road reconstruction  
could not be destroyed with dynamite,  
because of bonding materials used such as eggs.  
this is a conceptual suggestion not a literal one.  
Flom visioning walls made very sturdy with  
holes.

(11) I think all your projects should reach  
out to students of all grades for written and  
artistic expressions. They're probably loaded with  
suggestions we've never thought of, at least  
conceptually. Doctors need to stop letting  
their education interfere with their learning. Kids  
don't have the tunnel, monetary & political  
biases park personnel have. This will also  
increase interests children have in our national  
parks and natural habitats.

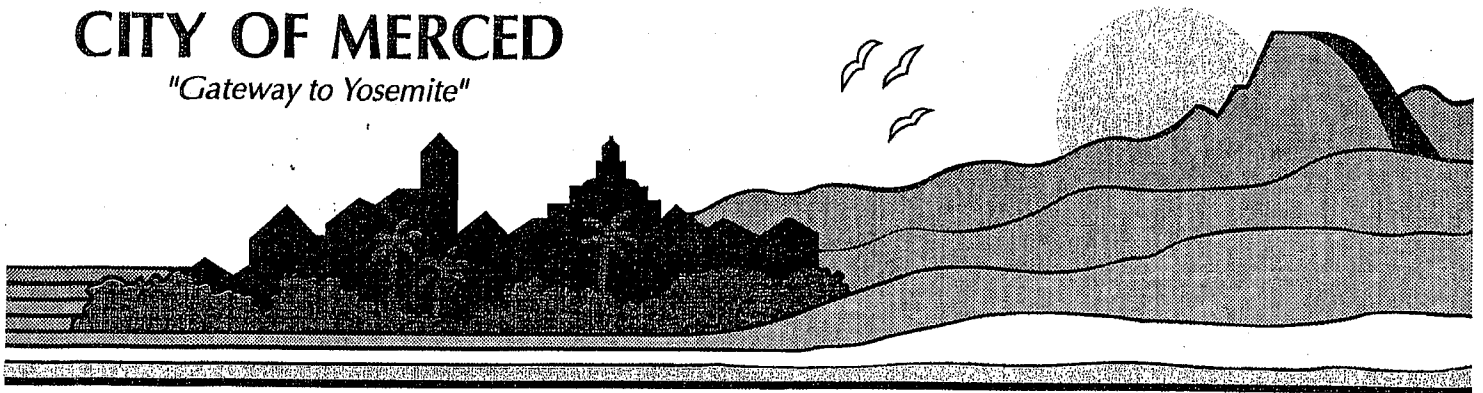
(12) Road closures hopefully will get adequate  
media coverage for visitors. Alternate routes need to  
be advertised. I do not agree with "permanent"  
closures that will have negative impacts on the river  
so visitors won't be inconvenienced or denied access to  
the park. Your socks can dry if prompting & hiking  
in puddles but if you go off the trail to keep your  
socks dry - soil & plant destruction cannot be fixed so  
easily. Visitors can plan another visit or go to another park  
or use a different route that includes not being able to  
visit to protect the river if needed. Sincerely  
Barbara Yorganyan

Barbara Yorganyan

Fresno, California, 93703

# CITY OF MERCED

"Gateway to Yosemite"



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
(209) 385-6834 • (209) 723-1780 FAX

December 29, 2006

RECEIVED  
EPR-34-5  
JAN 09 2006  
P. 1082  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Superintendent Michael Tollefson  
U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service  
Yosemite National Park  
P.O. Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 95389

Dear Superintendent Tollefson:

The City of Merced is concerned about the status of the El Portal Road reconstruction project inside Yosemite National Park. The complete reconstruction of the road is urgently needed for the sake of the park and the safety and benefit of its neighbors.

Based on the public scoping session, it is clear that the roadway is in terrible condition and it is likely to collapse unless it is immediately rebuilt. While a short-term patchwork might keep the road useable, the long-term goal should be for a solid road that is reconstructed to meet the future needs of the park and its visitors.

The collapse of the roadway would result in pollution in the Merced River Basin. Road debris would fill the streambed, polluting the waters, damaging the ecosystem and endangering species. The damage would be spread downstream for miles, with additional environmental consequences.

A failure of the El Portal Road would be dangerous to park visitors, residents, and staff. Motorists in the Yosemite Valley would be threatened by the collapse of the road. Without the road in good condition, emergency vehicles would have restricted access to the Valley and lives would be endangered.

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Superintendent Michael Tollefson  
Page 2  
December 29, 2006

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P-2072

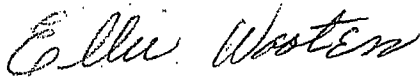
The road link provided by the El Portal Road gives visitors from around the globe a chance to experience one of the world's greatest natural wonders. Without that road, visitors to the park would be limited to one entrance, and access to the Yosemite Valley and park environs would be severely restricted.

Without the El Portal Road in good working condition, there would be a severe economic impact to the foothills and parts of the Eastern San Joaquin Valley. Much of the transient occupancy tax raised in Merced comes from visitors to Yosemite who stay overnight in our community. Mariposa, Oakhurst, and other Sierra communities depend on tourists for their economic survival. A collapse of the road would have a major effect on the City of Merced and the surrounding area.

We hope that the Park Service will act quickly to accelerate the timeframe for rebuilding the one-mile segment of El Portal Road from Big Oak Flat Road to the Pohono Bridge. We need the road to remain open during the construction because it is a vital link from our community to the park.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter and to express our support for the project.

Sincerely,



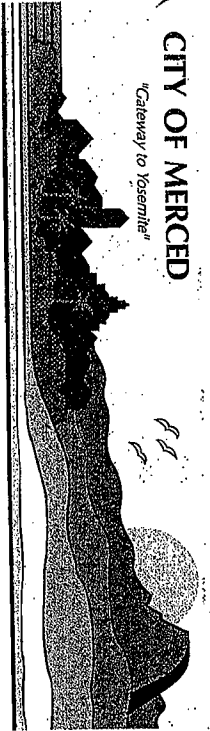
Ellie Wooten  
Mayor

EW:nr



CITY OF MERCED

"Gateway to Yosemite"

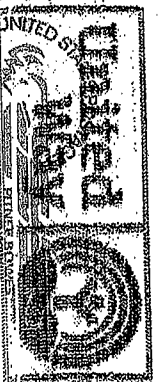


678 West 18th Street • Merced, California 95340

STOCKTON/STKM

29 DEC 2006

CA 952



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MAILED FROM ZIP CODE 95340

Superintendent Michael Tollefson  
U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service  
Yosemite National Park  
P.O. Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 95389

35389+0577 8004

